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Written statement* submitted by First Modern Agro. Tools - Common Initiative Group (FI.MO.AT.C.I.G), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[18 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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"De facto statelessness" of the Anglophone Linguistic Minority in Cameroon

The problem in Cameroon is not that Anglophones are not considered as Cameroonian nationals by the 36-year old government in 'excessive misuse of power' under the operation of its law; the main contention is that the nationalities of the Anglophone linguistic minority in Cameroon are not effective. This is "de facto statelessness".

Anglophones are marginalized and discriminated by the majority francophone government officials at the public service and military. Anglophone names are easily identified and then treated like second class citizens in recruitments, treatment of official documents, nominations to good positions in government etc. The law is clear and impartial but those in position of authority who are mainly the francophone people in Cameroon do not follow the letter of the law.

The manner in which government officials who are mainly francophone people apply its nationality laws practically on the Anglophone linguistic minority is partial; incompetent francophone authorities in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon do not interpret correctly the common law(the Anglophone law), consequently many find themselves in prison innocently.

Cameroonian nationality is granted based on links through families or through territory, place of birth, parents who are Cameroonians and habitual resident in Cameroon, it is only the practical aspect on how the Anglophone linguistic minority are treated that matters.

In line with the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues to bring out the root causes of statelessness and the specific conditions or barriers that result in a huge proportion of the world's stateless persons belonging to minorities we would like to briefly say that the root causes of the " de facto statelessness of the Anglophone linguistic minority in Cameroon is the referendum in 1961 where west Cameroonians(Anglophone linguistic minority) were not permitted to achieve self-independence in 1961, followed by a unilateral change of a referral decision in 1972 on the two-state federation of francophone people and the Anglophones in Cameroon to a republic of Cameroon to the detriment of the Anglophone linguistic minority. Consequently Anglophones are marginalized and discriminated to the highest level in government. Ministers have called Anglophones two cubes of sugar dropped in a basin of water (the francophone people), and that an Anglophone (at least 7milions Anglophone nationals exist in Cameroon) cannot be president in Cameroon. Moreover the centralized nature of Cameroonian unitary state makes things more difficult to Anglophones due to language barrier when they have to encounter the central government.

What are the main obstacles to Anglophone linguistic minority people in Cameroon obtaining and/or retaining nationality? Why do they seem to be particularly affected or even targeted in this respect?

The root causes of the "de facto statelessness" of the Anglophone linguistic minority in Cameroon is the referendum in 1961 where west Cameroonians (Anglophone linguistic minority) were not permitted to achieve self-independence in 1961, followed by a unilateral change of a referral decision in 1972 on the two-state federation of francophone people and the Anglophones in Cameroon to a republic of Cameroon to the detriment of the Anglophone linguistic minority. Moreover the centralized nature of Cameroonian unitary state coupled with a 36-year rule of sit-tight President PAUL BIYA in office make things more difficult to Anglophones due to language barrier when they have to encounter the central government.

What are the challenges to effectively address statelessness, including its causes and impact on Anglophone linguistic minorities in Cameroon?

- The Marginalization of the Anglophone linguistic minority in Cameroon by the francophone majority. Anglophones sometimes called in Cameroon by the francophone people in Cameroon "Anglo-fools" due to what happened in 1961 and 1972.
- Discrimination of the Anglophones in government i.e. public service and the military in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and

- The gradual eradication of the English culture in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon which both is assimilation and an evidence of marginalization.

"De facto stateless" Anglophone linguistic minority in Cameroon and consequential human rights situation.
The ongoing crises in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon have reached a level where the government has declared war on the Anglophone people of Cameroon. The government on its pedestal has chosen to use the gun and violence on the Anglophone linguistic minority instead of calling for inclusive dialogue and has classified people fighting for their rights as terrorists and rebels. We have recorded thousands of casualties since the beginning of the Anglophone crises, civilians' homes are burnt down and both food and cash crops are destroyed by the Cameroonian military. Civilians flee their homes and live in bushes or forests. This is mostly in places of battling between the military and the so-called Ambazonian defense forces (ADF). Ending these crises without solving the Anglophone problem would do no good as there is a very high potential of the crises to continue for the next two years and the crises would come again one day if the problem is not solved.

At least nine leaders of the interim government of SCACUF-a movement for the restoration of the independence of southern Cameroon have disappeared.
A source reported that they were abducted in Nigeria by "un commando Camerounaiseinfiltre au Nigeria", another Newspaper source says that they were abducted by the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS). It says that the SSS went with guns and ammunitions to the hotel when they took them away. Evidently it was a mixture of the two forces that carried out the operation. According to both sources they were abducted on Friday the 5th of January 2018. They were about to hold a meeting at NERA hotel Ekweuma road, Nigeria.
Those abducted include:
-Mr. AyukTabe Julius
-Dr. NforNgalaNfor
-Dr.FidelisNdeChe
-Dr.HenryKimen
-Prof. Augustine Awasum
-Dr. Cornelius Kwanga
-Mr. Tassang Wilfred
-Dr. OgorkNtui
-Barrister Elias Eyambe
-BaristerShufai Blaise Berinyuy

Ever since the Cameroonian government's spokesman Minister IssaTchiroma on the 29th of January 2018 confirmed that these activists abducted in Nigeria were extradite to Cameroon. But neither the Cameroonian government nor the Nigerian government has been able to present these activists to the public since their abduction, nor accept anyone to visit them in their prison cells, including their wives, husbands, children, friends, other family members, lawyers and the UN human right commissions. A newspaper source claim all those abducted are in Yaoundé in a place known as SED (secretaired'etat de la defence), but there is no evidence.
Amnesty International had earlier warned that extradition of these activists to Cameroon could lead to torture.
All the family members of the disappeared confirm that they do not know the whereabouts of all those who have disappeared.
They all agree with the public view that all those abducted may have been assassinated or are still in Nigeria or in Cameroon or somewhere else.
Public opinion further holds that it could make some sense if the government can explain to both National and International community why she is keeping the activists in secret incommunicado despite claiming they have been handed over to the judiciary for interrogations.
As a matter of fact I cannot jump into conclusions to say the activists are actually arbitrarily detained in Cameroon. I have a mixed feeling too; they may not be alive or are still in Nigeria if not in prison in Cameroon or elsewhere.
There have been a lot of kidnappings of government officials, tensions, luting, killings and fighting between government forces and the so-called Ambazonian Defense forces (ADF) with the characteristics of war in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. This is in response to the disappearance of the Ambazonian leaders.